

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended): A method of evaluating compounds which are effective for treatment or prevention of obesity comprising:
- a)
    - ~~\_\_\_\_\_ i) \_\_\_\_\_ a step in which a test compound is administered to or contacted with a test animal or a test cell, and~~
    - ~~\_\_\_\_\_ ii) \_\_\_\_\_ a step in which it is confirmed whether or not said test compound regulates expression levels of LCE gene or a gene which is functionally equivalent to said gene, in said test animal or test cell. or~~
  - ~~\_\_\_\_\_ b~~
    - ~~\_\_\_\_\_ i) \_\_\_\_\_ a step in which a test compound is contacted with a test animal or a test cell possessing a fusion gene comprising an expression regulatory region of LCE gene and a reporter gene, and~~
    - ~~\_\_\_\_\_ ii) \_\_\_\_\_ a step in which expression of said reporter gene in said test animal or test cell is assayed; or~~
  - ~~\_\_\_\_\_ c)~~
    - i) a step in which a test compound is contacted with LCE protein and
    - ii) a step in which it is confirmed whether or not said test compound exhibits an effect on the activity of said protein; or
  - ~~\_\_\_\_\_ d)~~
    - ~~\_\_\_\_\_ i) \_\_\_\_\_ a step in which a test compound is contacted with a plurality of elongase proteins including LCE,~~
    - ~~\_\_\_\_\_ ii) \_\_\_\_\_ a step in which the activities of said plurality of elongase proteins are assayed, and~~
    - ~~\_\_\_\_\_ iii) \_\_\_\_\_ a step in which test compounds are selected which inhibit LCE activity among said plurality of elongase proteins.~~

Claims 2-21 (Cancelled)

Claim 22 (New): The method of Claim 1 wherein the effect is an inhibition of LCE activity.

Claim 23 (New): A method of evaluating compounds which are effective for treatment or prevention of obesity comprising:

- i) a step in which a test compound is contacted with a plurality of elongase proteins including LCE,
- ii) a step in which the activities of said plurality of elongase proteins are assayed, and
- iii) a step in which test compounds are selected which inhibit LCE activity among said plurality of elongase proteins.

Claim 24 (New): The method of Claim 23 wherein the effect is an inhibition of LCE activity.